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SPACE CENTER Roundup

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Employees share joy of engineering

THIS YEAR, JSC celebrated eight years of observing National Engineers Week when some 175 civil service and contractor employees visited elementary, middle and high school classrooms to encourage students to pursue careers in engineering, science, math and technology. The visits were part of a national outreach program called Discover "E" ("E" for Engineering). This year's activities continued into March.

To reach more students this year, JSC's Education and Community Support Branch partnered with Texas Education Agency's Education Service Centers last August to distribute brochures concerning JSC's JASON Project to about 3,000 Houston area teachers. "As a follow-on to that partnership, we developed a National Engineers Week invitation list that included some twenty school districts," said Mae Mangieri, JSC's National Engineers Week coordinator. "We were pleased that twenty-seven Houston Independent School District schools responded to our invitation to participate in this year's program. In 1998, only eight HISD schools responded to our invitation."

The volunteers shared their unique space-related knowledge with students and teachers as part of JSC's commitment to the local educational community. During their classroom presentations, they engaged students by using a variety of hands-on experiments and visual props like space-suit items, helmets and gloves.

Howard Hu of JSC's Guidance, Navigation and Control's Design and Analysis Branch and Tara Jochim of Boeing's International Space Station Communication and Tracking Group gave presentations on the International Space Station to several eighth grade classes at Webster Intermediate. Hu and Jochim presented a brief overview of the ISS including its mission, its design specification, the benefits of international partner participation, and the types of research planned on board the space station. The students were shown a video that provided additional information about the ISS and its research capabilities.

"I had a great experience talking about the space station at Webster Intermediate," said Hu. "The students asked good questions and at times surprised me with how much they knew about the International Space Station. Some of the students with whom we spoke were just beginning a mini-course on the station, and I think our presentation provided them with a great starting point."

For the first time, astronauts visited local area high schools, and the response on the part of teachers and students was outstanding. "It was very interesting to hear how an average high school student grew up to be an astronaut," wrote Mark Stamp, chemistry teacher at Ball High School in Galveston about Astronaut Dan Tani's visit. "The kids were impressed with the possibilities."

Almost all of the evaluation forms received from teachers were highly positive about the JSC presenters. "Phillip Curell and Rich Mrozinski were excellent guest speakers," wrote



JSC Photo S99-02352

DISCOVER "E"— JSC engineer Howard Hu, above left, works with students from Webster Intermediate School as part of National Engineers Week activities. Hu and children from Rene DeLafuente's class built paper rockets powered by Alka-Seltzer and water. Fourth grade student Cedric Martin raises his hand to ask a question during Astronaut Steven Nagel's visit. Nagel, left, spoke to fourth and fifth grade classes at Rizzuto Elementary School in La Porte.

fourth grade teacher Jan Romeis from Greentree Elementary School in Humble ISD about two JSC employees. "Their 'team' presentation was most informative, and this visit provided an excellent opportunity for our students and school to connect with our NASA resources."

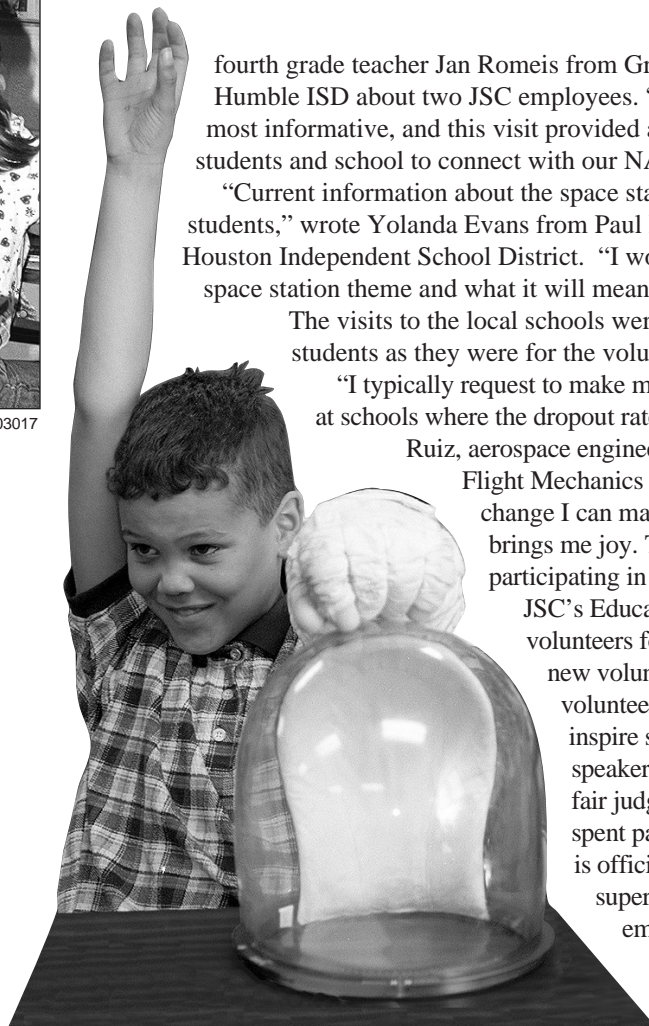
"Current information about the space station was very interesting for the students," wrote Yolanda Evans from Paul Revere Middle School in the Houston Independent School District. "I would like to continue with the space station theme and what it will mean to the students in the future."

The visits to the local schools were as exciting for the teachers and students as they were for the volunteers.

"I typically request to make my presentation to at-risk students at schools where the dropout rate is the highest," said Michael Ruiz, aerospace engineer in JSC's Aeroscience and

Flight Mechanics Division. "Whatever positive change I can make in their lives, however slight, brings me joy. That's the satisfaction I get out of participating in National Engineers Week."

JSC's Education Outreach Program provides volunteers for local schools year round, and new volunteers are always needed. As a volunteer, employees can help educators inspire students by participating as guest speakers, career day speakers, science fair judges, tutors and mentors. Time spent participating in an approved event is official duty time, and with supervisory approval civil service employees may charge their volunteer time to a special education labor code. ■



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Week.

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Dressing to suit
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millennium.

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